
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Water Conservation at Home

The average adult needs only 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of water per day to maintain health, but in the United States, we each use 125 to 150 gallons per day for cooking, washing, flushing, and outdoor use. Our wasteful habits deplete clean water reserves faster than we can replenish them, pollute waterways, and stress aging drinking water and sewage treatment facilities beyond their capacities.

We waste water by practicing bad habits, like leaving the water running when we brush our teeth, and by employing inefficient water use devices. Installing new water-saving equipment and small devices can save significant amounts of water per household. Many devices are inexpensive, available in local hardware stores, and easy to install. They can also save on energy costs. By following a few simple steps, a typical family of four can save an astounding 50,000 to 100,000 gallons of water per year.

In the House

- Repair leaky faucets, indoors and out. One leaky faucet can waste up to 4,000 gallons of water per month and increase energy costs.
- Install faucet aerators. These inexpensive devices can reduce water use up to 60 percent, while maintaining a strong flow.
- When cooking, peel and clean vegetables in a large bowl of water instead of under the running tap.
- Compost food scraps rather than using a garbage disposal.
- When hand washing dishes, rinse dishes in a basin, rather than under the tap.
- Run full-load dishwashers to save 15 gallons per load and hot water costs, too.
- When buying a new dishwasher, select one with a "light-wash" option. Newer models use 20 percent less water than older ones.
- Take short showers instead of baths. Showers use three times less water than a bath.
- Install a low-flow showerhead. This will cut water use in the shower to just 3 gallons per minute and still provide an invigorating flow.
- Repair leaky toilets and flush handles stuck in the "on" position. Add 12 drops of food coloring to the tank. If color appears in the bowl one hour later, the unit is leaking.
- Avoid using automatic bowl cleaners in the toilet. These chemicals rapidly degrade flapper valves, causing toilets to leak.
- Install a toilet displacement device to save thousands of gallons of water per year. Place one to three weighted plastic jugs into the tank, making sure the jugs don't interfere with the flushing mechanism or a suitable flow. Or, instead of jugs, use toilet dams that hold back a reservoir of water during each flush. Don't use bricks because they can chip and foul the flushing mechanism.

- When buying a new toilet, select a low-flush model that uses less than 1-¹/₂ gallons of water to flush, saving over 7,000 gallons per year per person.
- Shut off water when not in use, such as when you brush your teeth or shave.
- When purchasing a new washing machine, buy a water-saving model. New models save energy too.
- For old and new machines, run full loads only.

Taking Water Conservation Outdoors

- Set mower blades on a high setting (2" to 3") to provide natural ground shade and promote water retention by the soil.
- Water lawn and garden early in the morning when evaporation is lowest.
- Use a rain gauge and water no more than 1 inch per week. Place several empty cans around the yard to determine how long it will take to apply 1 inch of water, then only run hoses or sprinklers for that time.
- Collect rainwater for watering plants using a barrel covered with a screen.
- Use rain sensors on automatic sprinkler systems.
- Operate in-ground sprinkler systems manually. Only use when less than an inch of rainfall per week has fallen. Set the sprinkler heads to water only the grass and not paved areas.
- Use drip irrigation to water flower beds and non-lawn landscaped areas. Or hand water these areas.
- Plant native species suited to your area. Ask your local nursery for plant and grass species that require less water.
- When washing your car, turn off the hose between rinses, or wash with a bucket and sponge and only use the hose for rinsing.
- Sweep down decks and driveways instead of hosing them down.

For Additional Information

For more in depth fact sheets concerning water conservation at home please call the DES Water Supply Engineering Bureau at (603) 271-2947, or visit the DES water conservation website at www.des.nh.gov/h2o_conservation.htm.